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ABSTRACT

Basic qualitative research was conducted in classrooms of two teachers in order to examine the nature of their enacted curriculum. Hidden curriculum was investigated as one component of the enacted curriculum in the two classrooms. One teacher taught a regular first grade class, and the other taught a class of developmentally handicapped children 7 and 8 years of age. Data obtained from field notes on classroom observations, interviews, audiotapes, teacher lesson plans and other artifacts were analyzed inductively in a search for regularities, patterns, and themes. Findings indicated that students in each classroom had opportunities to learn via a powerful hidden curriculum, which was transmitted through types of activity structures, time structures, physical space arrangements, and teacher behavior. Since hidden curriculum was embedded in tasks within these structures, it was part of many daily occurrences in the two classrooms. Findings suggest that teachers teach much more than academic content, and must understand that they convey norms, values, and behaviors in very subtle ways. Since hidden curriculum is teacher-driven in classrooms, it is imperative that teachers be aware of it so that they make sound judgments about what they want to convey. Implications of the findings for educational practice are discussed. (RH)

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HIDDEN CURRICULUM: THE ELUSIVE SIDE OF CLASSROOM LIFE IN FIRST GRADE

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HIDDEN CURRICULUM: THE ELUSIVE SIDE OF CLASSROOM LIFE IN FIRST GRADE

Elementary classrooms are dynamic places in which there is a constant negotiation and construction of knowledge and meaning. Although curriculum documents provide a skeleton, or core curriculum, much is conveyed in elementary classrooms which is not included in these formal documents. Hidden, social, and teacher constructed curriculum, among others, are examples of types of enacted curriculum through which information and meanings are conveyed to students. These types of curriculum, however, are not a part of formal curriculum documents or teachers' lesson plans. The focus here is on one type of enacted curriculum, hidden curriculum, and its impact on learning in two first grade classrooms.

What is Hidden Curriculum?

Along with and embedded in the academic curriculum, there is also an implicit, latent, tacit or hidden curriculum, which is also conveyed in classrooms along with, or as a "by-product" of, overt curriculum. The hidden curriculum consists of norms, values, expectations and meanings conveyed to students by a teacher or a school without necessarily intending for this to occur. Some view the hidden curriculum as the non-academic outcomes of schooling.

Hidden curriculum can be viewed from various theoretical perspectives and has baffled experts for years. Eisner (1979)

contends that "schools teach much more--and much less--than they intend to teach" (p. 74), and that via hidden curriculum, schools teach students to take on positions and roles that are similar to the ones they are exposed to in society. Vallance (1977) states that hidden curriculum can bear on a number of processes generating in or through schools, including values acquisition, socialization, and maintenance of class structure. Dreeben's (1967) study discusses what students learn as a result of the social structure of the classroom, i.e., teacher authority. Kohlberg (1970) links hidden curriculum with moral education, while Jackson (1968) refers to hidden curriculum as the "secondary consequences" of schooling. Giroux (1983) refers to hidden curriculum as the unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules in schools. Finally, Anyon (1981) posits that the hidden curriculum in schools helps to reproduce the political and economic structure of the larger society.

This overview of literature on hidden curriculum suggests several key points. First, curriculum theorists acknowledge the existence of hidden curriculum in classrooms. Second, hidden curriculum is difficult to assess because of the lack of awareness that it is being conveyed by teachers and at times even students. And third, hidden curriculum is a powerful force due to its impact on student acquisition of values and norms.

An Examination of Hidden Curriculum in Two Elementary Classrooms: Metholodology

Basic qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982) was conducted in the classrooms of two teachers (a first grade teacher and a teacher of a Developmentally Handicapped classroom 7-8 year old) in order to examine the nature of their enacted curriculum using sustained participant observation. In particular, hidden curriculum was examined as one component of the enacted curriculum in the two classrooms.

One teacher was observed for thirty days and the other for twenty-nine days, both for three hours each day. During the sixth week of observation, a full week was spent in the classrooms in order to ascertain the nature of the total day. In-depth interviews were also conducted with the teachers during the sixth week of observation. Fieldnotes were taken continually about the events observed, and audiotaping was conducted as a back-up to the fieldnotes. Teacher lesson plans and other artifacts (official curriculum guides, teachers' manuals and student work) were also examined.

Data were analyzed inductively in a search for regularities, patterns, and themes. Trustworthiness of the study was insured through prolonged observation at the site, extended observation, triangulation of data sources, number checks, and peer debriefings, (Guba and Lincoln, 1985).

Hidden Curriculum in First Grade

Hidden curriculum was identified during observation in the first grade classroom. It was embedded in types of activities, socialization and activity structures and teacher behaviors; and was evidenced during each of the thirty days of observation. It was a powerfully evident force in the classroom.

Hidden curriculum was conveyed as a result of the teacher's belief that children learn best in a non-threatening atmosphere in which there is "intellectual safety," thus it was acceptable to ask questions and make mistakes. She often told students that no one is perfect and that everyone makes mistakes, but that they must try. One statement was:

> Teacher: Don't be afraid to talk to me...I may holler. Do you understand I'm not angry?...If I hollered, let me give you a hug...We all make mistakes. I do too.

The first grade teacher also conveyed the notion that the world is not always a stationary and quiet place. She demonstrated this as she moved desks, chairs, smaller objects, and students around, and encouraged freedom of movement for herself as well as for the students.

This was also a classroom in which noise was not necessarily viewed as "bad"; the teacher encouraged students to work together to help each other as she stated:

> Teacher: Adam, Amy, now you can go around as people need help. Don't give them the answers. Remember, a good teacher tells you <u>how</u> to do it.

Students were also encouraged to learn from each other when they read to the class. Thus, students were considered participants in their own as well as in their classmates' learning. Students were also permitted a certain amount of freedom of choice; they could decide whether they worked alone or with a peer, which work to do when, and in some cases, how to do the work.

The fact that this classroom was a place of business was also conveyed as part of the hidden curriculum in the first grade teacher's classroom. The students began work when they arrived each day, and by the time in the year that observation was conducted, knew what work or activity was to be carried out next during the day. The teacher also modeled this businesslike manner by always being on task, either on her own or with the students. Businesslike atmosphere was noted in the classroom on all of the days observed.

Responsibility was also conveyed in several ways. Students were expected to bring in their library books, candy sales money, notes from home, and lunch money. The "Helping Hands" for each week were responsible for classroom tasks, i.e., plants, lights, leader, caboose, messenger, housekeeper or paper passer. Most of these tasks were done at least once each day.

Problem-solving was also a feature of this classroom, and served as an indicator of a view and set of expectations on the part of the teacher. The teacher often confronted the students with classroom problems, and then asked the students to

brainstorm what they could do about it. On one occasion, as two students were hitting each other, the teacher asked them if they wanted to solve the problem, and if so, how.

There was also an emphasis placed on following directions, which was a substantial part of most activities and occurred on all days observed. Directions were often stated several times, and reinforced with the teacher's questions about them. Rewards, either verbal or material, were common for following directions. The notion of 'follow directions and you will be rewarded' was conveyed and is exemplified in the following statement:

> Teacher: David, you did a good job. You followed directions. Spaced well...if I were Mom, I'd frame this. I'm proud of this; look how neat it is. (Teacher goes over to David, hugs him, and gives him a button.)

Finally, patriotism was stressed with the Pledge of Allegiance on each of the mornings observed except one. Not only was the Pledge recited, but students were expected to participate fully in it. For example, what follows was the teacher's reaction one day to some students who were not participating completely:

> "Why are some of you not saying the Pledge? You put your hand on your heart. Appreciate our freedoms... if not, put your name on the board."

Hidden Curriculum in the DH Classroom

Hidden curriculum was also conveyed in this classroom on each of the twenty-nine days observed. A great deal of hidden curriculum was conveyed during Arrival Time, the first activity of the day. During Arrival Time, students learned tidy behavior

by hanging up their coats, changing from boots to shoes, removing their chairs from their desktops, and placing their items for Sharing in a safe place. They also developed socialization skills as they chatted informally with their peers and with the teacher, and shared a sense of group as everyone tried to make paper hats for the three students who forgot theirs on Hat Day. The norms that surrounded this time of day were clearly communicated, for example, it was acceptable to be noisy and move around the room freely. Arrival Time also provided the teacher with an opportunity to talk with students about notes she had sent home and the days that parents were planning to come in.

Hidden curriculum was also conveyed during the second activity of the day, the morning Announcements, Pledge of Allegiance, and Morning Song. Listening, or pretending to listen to the announcements quietly, saying or mouthing the words to the Pledge and song, standing, placing one's right hand on one's heart, facing the flag, taking off one's hat, and singing or pretending to sing were all the norms of this activity, which were conveyed on each of the twenty-eight days the activity occurred. The message of being patriotic, or at least conforming to what everyone else was doing, was delivered.

There were numerous aspects of hidden curriculum conveyed through the Superstars activity, which was a daily award for students who completed work satisfactorily. Merits of the work ethic, the benefits of trying and its rewards, the pride in being recognized in front of the group, and verbal praise for good work

were the norms around Superstars. The DH teacher used rewards and positive reinforcement to motivate students, and always thanked the Superstars; this too occurred daily. She often told the entire class that they were doing well. The hidden curriculum conveyed was that if a student works hard consistently, they will be rewarded and it will "pay off."

This was also the time when the teacher set the tone for the day, with comments such as "We're going to work even though it's Friday," and "We're going to work quietly and keep our hands to ourselves." She also used this time to discuss the quality of the class' work in general, and stated that they needed to be more careful, think about their coloring, and do their best to become Superstars. One day she stated, "It's your responsibility to make sure I get a folder every day," and asked the students for their opinions on how they could do better.

The Sharing activity also conveyed a set of rules about where to sit, how to sit, how to get a turn, and how to share. There was also an academic stress during fifteen of the days that Sharing occurred; thus Sharing became a vehicle for carrying substantive material to students. Sharing also contained the hidden curriculum of socialization/public speaking skills; students became better acquainted with one another during this activity and improved their speaking skills.

Choosing Room Helpers weekly provided another occasion to impart hidden curriculum. Again, waiting for one's turn quietly and by raising one's hand was a norm, as was the reality that

students did not always end up with the chores that they preferred. The importance of each task was stressed, communicating that no one task was more or less important than any other.

Clean-up, lining up, going for drinks and to the restroom each conveyed curriculum about orderliness and routines (lining up by rows and cleaning the room), conformity (lining up by a certain wall), following the rules (boys and girls in separate lines).

There were also class discussions which gave the students the opportunity to offer input about the class, and conveyed the message that joint problem-solving and inquiry is one process by which they could participate in classroom procedures. For example, the discussion of the change in the room arrangement helped to communicate to students that things in the world do change, and that this is fine. On another day, the teacher discussed students hitting one another on the playground and asked, "How are we going to solve this problem?"

As was the case in the first grade classroom, hidden curriculum was also a powerful force which conveyed meanings and interpretations to students in the DH classrooms.

Toward a Greater Awareness of the Power of Hidden Curriculum

Students in each of these classrooms had opportunities to learn via a powerful hidden curriculum, which was transmitted through types of activity structures, time structures, physical space arrangements and teacher behaviors. Since hidden

curriculum was embedded in task within these structures, it was a part of many of the daily occurrences in the two classrooms. The two teachers studied were both aware of some of the the hidden curriculum that was being conveyed in their classrooms, and unaware of some instances of it.

These findings have major implications for teachers, administrators, and supervisors as well as teacher education in terms of level of awareness about the existence and power of the hidden curriculum. Findings suggest that teachers teach much more than academic content, and must understand that they also convey norms, values and behaviors in very subtle ways. Since hidden curriculum is predominantly teacher driven in classrooms, it is imperative that teachers have an awareness of it so that they may make sound judgments about what they want to convey. In-service activities about nature of curriculum could be a vehicle for building such an awareness. Teacher dialogue with colleagues as well as with students could also foster awareness about hidden curriculum.

School administrators and supervisors who observe classroom processes must also conceptualize the broad range of learning opportunities that occur in classrooms. Thus, in conducting observation and teacher evaluation, they must not only examine the substantive content conveyed, but also the other types of curriculum events that provide learning opportunities to students. Examining only academic content and curricular documents leaves out other significant dimensions. Instead,

administrators and supervisors must also be skilled in examining the ways that types of curriculum besides the overt impact on it. For example, such an administrator or supervisor would make a connection between a U-seating arrangement and teacher warmth and a safe classroom climate. They would also view seating arrangement and teacher behavior as impacting on students' acquisition of the overt curriculum.

Finally, the nature of curriculum should be a component of programs at the undergraduate level, so that beginning teachers will have an awareness of the types of curriculum conveyed in classrooms. Questions such as what is curriculum? and how is it conveyed? could be dealt with. Perhaps this would sensitize beginning teachers toward a broader view of the academic material and meanings they convey to students.

Many questions about hidden curriculum remain for future work. More information needs to be gained about how it impacts on student learning. Other questions, such as how hidden curriculum may be assessed, and its cumulative effects, may also be raised. Therefore, there is a need for future research in classrooms to "get at" the hidden curriculum and the ways that it operates in and impacts on classrooms.

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